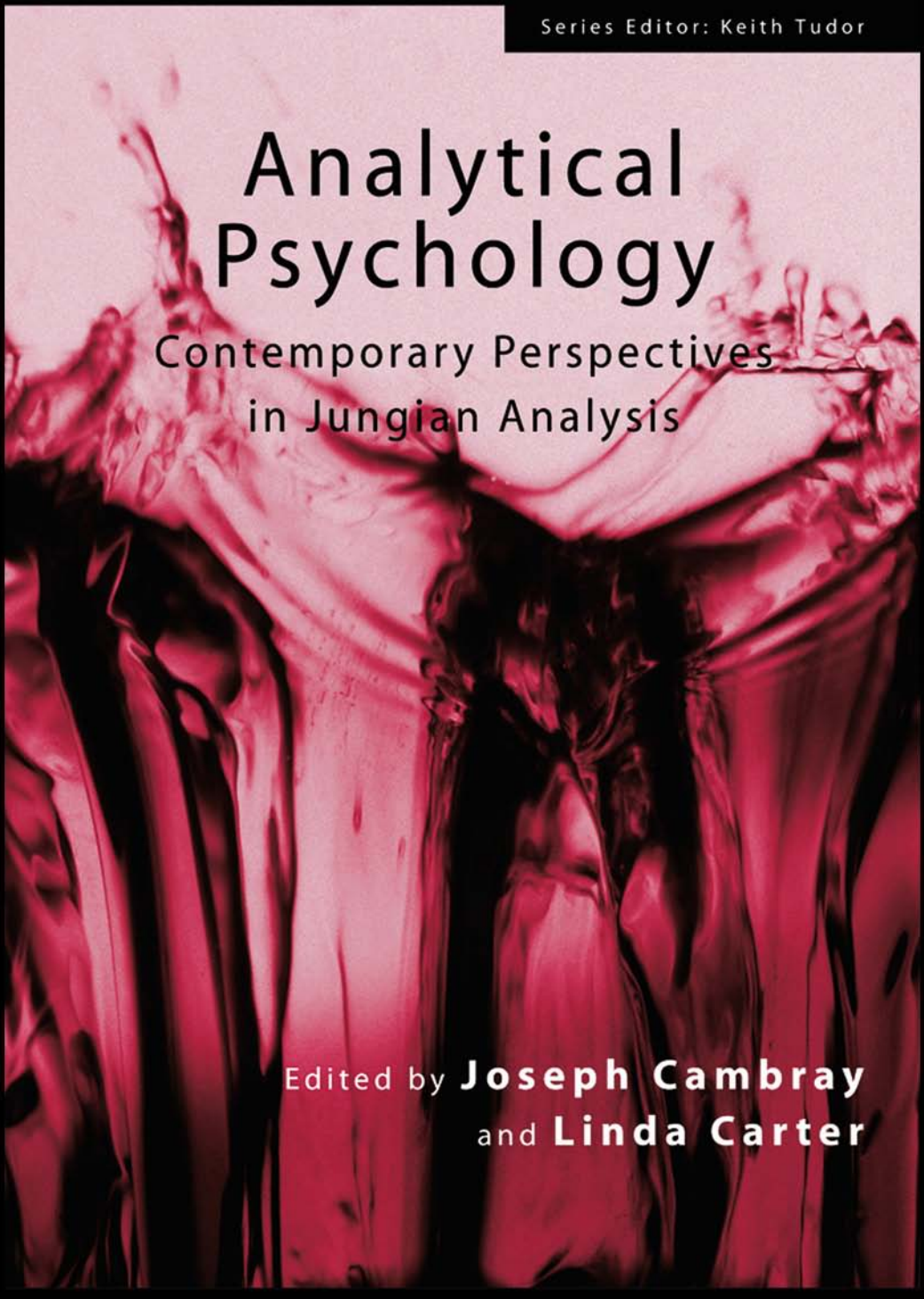
ADVANCING THEORY IN THERAPY

Series Editor: Keith Tudor

Analytical Psychology

Contemporary Perspectives in Jungian Analysis



Edited by **Joseph Cambray** and **Linda Carter**

Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details

Chapter 8

Spiritual and religious aspects of modern analysis

Murray Stein

The religious function

Jung proposed that a native religious function exists within the human psyche (see, among many references, Jung 1966:para. 150). *Homo religiōsus* is by no means an exceptional creature. In fact, everyone is to some extent religiously inclined, at least implicitly. The religious function is a mythopoetic instinct of sorts, and it bespeaks humankind's inherent tendency to create myth. This function manifests wherever people make culture and try to find meaning. It arises spontaneously in individuals, and it can be studied in the historical records of religions and in the ritual practices of all human beings in all time periods.

In modern times, too, the religious function continues to display its effects. Since these may be dressed in our contemporary fashions of thought and imagination, they are often not recognized as religious phenomena. In a late paper entitled "Flying saucers: a modern myth of things seen in the skies," Jung (1958) discussed the frequent "observations" of circular extraterrestrial spaceships as evidence that a new myth was being elaborated in the collective psyche of Western people. Whenever humans confront the unknown – in this case "outer space" and the prospect of exploring it or being confronted by its inhabitants – archetypal images and psychological patterns are projected and experienced. The manifestation of these primordial images, woven together in typical narrative structures common to mythologies since time immemorial, represents the activation of the religious function as humans attempt to map the territory beyond the frontiers of the known. Death is another such frontier, and archetypal images of an afterlife are generated at this borderland in order to gain some sort of conscious mastery over the mystery of death.

When a person enters analysis, too, a space for projections opens up and becomes available for the religious function to be stimulated into action. At first, this is unknown territory. The reality of the analyst is and remains largely an enigma, as is the general notion of "the unconscious" from which so many interpretations derive. The aspects of the inner world that lie beyond the reach of simple reflection and introspection present a challenging puzzle.

Much needs to be made conscious and sorted out. As one enters this terrain, it becomes evident that more than personal memories and associations are hidden here. Peculiar dynamic factors come into play in the transference and through synchronistic events that cannot be easily explained or understood. In analysis a person is entering a *terra incognita*, and therefore archetypal projections are called forward.

As Jung observed, the religious function is present and actively at work in the analytic relationship, typically elaborating itself in the transference. It is instructive to note that when Jung introduces the notion of archetypes in his seminal work, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology* (1966), he does so by discussing transference. The analyst becomes mythologized in the analysand's psyche because the analyst's reality remains more or less concealed and shrouded in obscurity throughout the analytic treatment. Archetypal images (e.g. hero or demon, savior or guru) and themes (e.g. going on an adventure, crossing the open seas) are woven into the concrete experience of this intimate human encounter.

The analysand's psyche responds to the analyst and to the analytic space, characteristically, by projecting mythic features into them. The physical and mental frame of the human being conducting analytic sessions is tarnished or embellished with content from the analysand's personal and collective unconscious. Something uncanny, hidden, and at times even numinous is perceived and felt to be at work in the analysis. As an "analytic field" develops, the physical space in which analysis takes place also becomes highly symbolic in the perception and feeling of the analysand. Objects such as lamps and wall hangings can become invested with numinous symbolic value. Sometimes this aspect of analysis is vividly shown in dreams, which can portray the analyst as a mythical figure, larger than life, with demonic or godlike features. (This is no different in kind from the collective projections that fall upon celebrities and political leaders. Those too reveal the religious function at work, for good or ill.)

Jung put the religious function on a par with "instinct," as compelling and omnipresent as sexuality, aggression, or hunger. The religious function, as Jung understood and wrote about it, generates archetypal projections and experiences of numinosity using the rather ordinary objects and things in the surrounding world. Following Rudolf Otto's understanding of religious experience in *The Idea of the Holy*, Jung understood it as the experience of the *numinosum*, and he defined the "religious attitude" as one that calls a person to pay careful and scrupulous attention to "a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will" (Jung 1937:para. 6) but by the "powers" that lie beyond the visible and known world and create numinous effects within it. The religious attitude and the religious function go hand in hand as the individual develops sensitivity to manifestations of the archetypal dimension of the unconscious. As Jung conceived of the religious attitude, it is not primarily defensive in that its aim and purpose are not

fundamentally to ward off anxiety about insecurity or death. Rather it is observant and respectful of archetypal aspects of experience, which traditional religious people ordinarily attribute to the agency of an objective God. (It is of course well known that religion can be used for defensive purposes, but its real purpose is to conserve and respect the Powers and with its rituals to reproduce the experience of numinosity that generally lies at its point of origin.)

Jung used both of the two possible derivations of the word "religion." On the one hand, it can be seen as originating in the Latin *relegere*, meaning, "gather together, peruse"; alternatively and perhaps more accurately it is considered to derive from *religāre*, meaning "bind fast" (Onions 1966:754). (In Catholic parlance, a "religious" is someone "bound" by vows.) Jung employed both options: the "religious attitude" (from *relegere*) entails paying "careful and scrupulous attention" to numinous experience; the "religious function" (from *religāre*) links or binds together ego consciousness and the archetypal levels of the unconscious.

Jung considered the vital link between the ego and the archetypal level of the psyche, later termed the "ego-Self axis" by Erich Neumann and Edward Edinger, essential for mental health. This forms the very foundation and necessary precondition for human wholeness. Neurosis occurs when this link is disturbed, that is, when the conscious ego drifts away from its moorings too far into a state of inner alienation from the Self, the psychic source and ground of its existence. Jung called this pathological condition "one-sidedness." The religious function calls a person back to the source, and thus the innate striving of the psyche for its own health and wholeness is intimately related to the religious function.

Since the goal of analysis, as Jung practiced and taught it, is to foster psychological wholeness, its purpose coincides with the goal of the religious function. In this sense, analysis stands in the service of the religious function. Both seek to foster and promote psychological wholeness by creating and maintaining a strong and vital connection between the conscious ego and the inner ground of its existence, the primordial archetypal images of the collective unconscious at the center of which is the Self.

As a side comment here, it should be noted that Jung (and most analysts after him) all too frequently found that analysands had appropriated and used the teachings and structures of established religion actually to thwart the work of the religious function. The practice of organized religion gets in the way of the religious function when it is used defensively or is taken too concretely and applied by the ego's defensive operations. Instead of assisting people to make and maintain a vital contact to the primordial images of the psyche, religious beliefs and practices may be misused by people primarily to defend themselves against abandonment anxiety or annihilation fears. If religious belief offers the comforting and soothing doctrine of eternal life for its adherents, for example, they may fall into the trap of infantile

dependency on the priests and religious authorities who control the means of grace. In such an event, analysis aims to undo the effects of religious habits that foster neurotic traits and behavior patterns such as obsessive-compulsive disorders ("scrupulosity"), exaggerated guilt reactions for perceived sins, fear of punishment by parental figures, infantile dependency on others, and so forth. Religions are no panacea for mental illness. On the contrary, they may exacerbate it, if not actually encourage or even create it. Religious leaders are famous for traumatizing people into belief and discipleship.

Analysis and modernity

Analysis arose within the cultural and historical context of modernity (for an excellent discussion of this, see Homans (1995). Here it found its special role as a method for the "cure of souls." Analysis as a profession distinct from medical psychiatry would never have taken hold in a traditionally religious culture, which covers the contingencies of meaning in its own manner and offers other methods for dealing with mental conflict and emotional anguish. To this day, analysis thrives only where modernity has put down deep roots and has shaped cultural expectations and concomitant anxieties. Traditional societies, and the more traditional parts of modern societies, are generally inhospitable to the analytic profession. In fact, many religious traditionalists and fundamentalists consider analysis subversive and dangerous.

Jung was keenly aware of his cultural context and comments on it in many places in his writings. Generally the people who came to him and to his followers and students for analysis were "modern people." That is, they were not religious in the familiar sense of the word, although many of them had grown up in traditionally religious families and surroundings, as had Jung himself. In his own analysis of the cultural situation in which he found himself working as a physician and analyst, Jung followed the well-known distinction between traditional and modern cultures. Traditional ones are rooted in and based upon religious myth, while modern culture grew out of a rational ("enlightened") critique of religion with its mythical images and metaphysical assumptions. As Karen Armstrong has written so persuasively in *The Battle for God*, using Johannes Sloek's (1996) useful distinction between *mythos* and *logos* forms of thinking, traditional cultures are grounded in *mythos* and modern culture is based on the principle of *logos* (Armstrong 2001). Analysis originated and continues to have its home primarily in the *logos* culture of post-enlightenment Europe, i.e. in modernity. Jung considered himself a Kantian in the sense that he accepted Kant's critique of pure reason and metaphysical knowledge. Jung did not believe that one can prove God's existence or that theology has access to special knowledge ("revelation") about the nature of the cosmos. Like most people around him, he subscribed to the scientific approach to knowledge. He was "modern."

The religious and spiritual problems that Jung addressed in his practical work with patients and in his writings are those of modern people who have departed from the beliefs of religious tradition. They are no longer contained religiously in a defined belief system and must make their way spiritually within a scientifically oriented culture that offers little guidance on questions of a spiritual nature. Modernity rejects (if it does not actually ridicule) all myth-based patterns of thought and behavior. The great advantage of modern scientific culture is that it works. It has produced steady improvement in the technical effectiveness of tools and instruments that can powerfully shape and change nature. It fails, however, to deliver what *mythos* cultures can, namely a sense of personal destiny and meaning within the framework of history and a cosmological symbol system.

Jung struggled with the bias of modernity against the mythic and symbolic. The basic problem of "modern man in search of a soul" (the title of one of Jung's better known works in English) is the absence of "soul." There is no transcendence in modernity. So the problem is that without the possibility for imagining personal meaning in a vast and impersonal, wholly material universe, the religious function fails and psychological wholeness becomes diminished as a viable option. In modernity, the human is generally seen to be merely a temporary phenomenon in a time-bound material universe. Religious experience, i.e. the experience of the *numinosum*, becomes interpreted as nothing more than a subjective emotional surge based on the arbitrary flow of brain chemistry and hormones. It carries no intrinsic value, and it points to nothing beyond itself. There are no true symbols in such a universe, only signs and delusions. This is the modernist bias.

Moreover, the modern person, once inculcated with the scientific and enlightened (*logos*) worldview, finds it impossible to return to traditional religion as a source of meaning. An existential purchase on myth becomes essentially impossible. Religious belief is indefensible from a scientific perspective. Unlike *mythos*-based culture, *logos*-culture operates strictly on the basis of scientific rationality, where every "truth" is continuously questioned and there are no permanent certainties. There are no unassailable spiritual facts, only theories, and every theory is open to doubt and revision. Thus modern people, it seems, are condemned to live a life of psychological poverty and partialness in the midst of material plenty, without the option of wholeness because the religious function has been disabled. They cannot create an effective link to the numinous archetypes of the collective unconscious. They must live a barren egoic existence, godless, without transcendent meaning, and sealed off from access to deeper layers of the psyche. They have no myth to live by and are cursed to make do without.

This is the dilemma that Jung sought to address in analysis. Is wholeness possible for modern people? Is there a way to allow the religious function to do its natural psychological work within the culture of modernity?

The religious function in analysis

How can people be spiritual while maintaining their cultural connections to modernity and their commitment to a scientific approach to knowledge? From this question blossomed many of Jung's written statements concerning the relation of analysis and the religious function. In such works as "Psychology and religion," "The symbolic life," "Psychotherapists or the clergy?" "Psychoanalysis and the cure of souls," and "A study in the process of individuation," Jung laid out the case for tending to the spiritual needs of modern men and women within the frame of analytic practice. (In recent times, the term "spiritual" has replaced "religious," to differentiate it from traditional religious forms and practices.) For many of the people who came to see him for psychological treatment, Jung stated more than once, the major problem was not medical but spiritual. It came down to the problem of absence of meaning and lack of contact with the archetypal. They were suffering from lack of wholeness because the religious function was not operating effectively. They were alienated from their own psychological roots, without inner mooring, adrift on the open seas of modernity without a compass. Jung also came to recognize that neurotic symptoms could be an expression of unsatisfied spiritual needs, and were therefore often the distorted expression of a poorly operating religious function. He would occasionally state that people should be grateful for their neuroses because these keep them from going even further into rationalistic one-sidedness. The neurosis paradoxically brings them back to themselves and to the careful and scrupulous observation of the powers at work in the psyche that cannot be controlled by the ego. Neurosis is, ironically, a modern type of religious attitude. Woody Allen would be emblematic of this state of affairs.

No matter what may be going on at the surface of conscious life, Jung theorized, the religious function may still be active in the unconscious. He therefore enlisted dreams to study the religious function at work within the unconscious of modern scientific people, on the theory that dreams offer a sort of X-ray of what is going on under the surface in the unconscious. In one such study, presented as an interpretation of a dream series in *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung sought to demonstrate the teleological movement of the psyche toward symbols of wholeness. The dreamer was a "modern man" with high scientific credentials (we now know it was Wolfgang Pauli, the physicist) who was under the psychological treatment of a student of Jung's. In this work, Jung argued that the religious function could be detected in the production of dream symbols. In his commentary he says nothing about the personal aspects of "the case." He sticks to the images of the dreams and links them into a chain of pieces that leads to several highly numinous, symbolic symbols of the Self.

In his own analytic practice, too, Jung would often spot the signs of thwarted spirituality in the dreams of patients as well as in the archetypal

transference. His method of active imagination, moreover, as used in conjunction with analysis of complexes, dreams, and the transference, became a modern type of spiritual discipline, akin to the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola or the meditation practices of some Eastern religious traditions. In the analytic experience, a person could discover and recover the religious function.

What Jung did in analysis with patients became a means for opening the modern person to the religious function active within the unconscious. If the "facts" from the unconscious, as they become available through dreams and transference, are carefully followed and observed in the course of a detailed analysis, the analysand comes into contact with the *spiritus rector* (i.e. the spiritual function) that resides inherently within the psyche. This contact brings about a breakup of the modern defenses against the spiritual (the cultural bias of modernity) and opens the way for a new type of spiritual and religious awareness outside of any defined religious traditions. Analysis became for Jung a road around the spiritual impasse created by modernity.

Jung's followers: the Jungians and the post-Jungians

This road became heavily trafficked by Jung's followers, who expanded upon his original insights and carried his model of analysis into many other areas of the world. Even a modest and cursory review of Jungian literature on the subject of spirituality and the religious function in analysis yields a plethora of titles and authors. Among the most notable in the first generation of Jungians was C.A. Meier (1977), whose small book, *Jung's Analytical Psychology and Religion*, summarizes beautifully Jung's views and the minimal additions of the early Jungians. Many other well-known Jungians of that generation contributed to this topic as well: Gerhard Adler, Barbara Hannah, Esther Harding, Jolande Jacobi, Aniela Jaffe, James Kirsch, M.L. von Franz, to name only some of the more outstanding. The Guild for Pastoral Psychology in London – for which Jung himself gave a talk in 1939 entitled "The symbolic life," James Kirsch offered the first printed pamphlet lecture on "The religious aspect of the unconscious," and Michael Fordham (who was not known for an emphasis on the religious function) gave the forty-sixth pamphlet lecture on "Analytical psychology and religious experience" – has been sponsoring annual lectures on the subject of analytical psychology and spirituality since 1939. The number of pamphlets published by now numbers nearly 300. This is an indication of the amount of attention given to the religious function by Jungians during the course of the past seven decades. Not all of these have to do, of course, with spirituality in analysis, but nearly all the works by Jungians assume analysis as the primary location in which the spiritual takes form within the cultural context of modernity.

With the era of the "post-Jungians," who are commonly identified as those who followed the first generation of "Jungians," a change in tone and

emphasis took place, and a new group of authors with a different kind of sensibility entered the scene. James Hillman's early books *Suicide and the Soul* (1964) and *Insearch* (1967) struck the new tone. Hillman gave the term "soul" psychological definition and wide credibility in the English-speaking world. This culminated in his bestseller, *The Soul's Code* (1997). Among the post-Jungians who followed Hillman's lead, spirituality became subsumed under the term "archetypal," which was subtly redefined to mean "essential" or "important" without reference to "the unconscious" or "the archetypes of the collective unconscious." Hillman's "archetypal psychology" also powerfully challenged the notion of psychological "monotheism" as represented by the centrality of the Self in the writings of Jung and his first generation of followers. Instead he proposed opening psychology to "polytheism," which presented a type of spirituality with a multiplicity of images and centers. Using the myths of the Greeks as the template for this version of the action of the religious function in the psyche, the appearance of the spiritual within analysis became more broadly available and generalized. Now it would also include the appearance of archetypal images in consciousness whether from "the unconscious" as in dreams, from "projections" as in transference, or from the phenomenal world of everyday experience. Contemporary life in the city and in the cinema, in relationships such as marriage and friendship and in family life, as well as in analysis, was scanned for archetypal images at play. Wherever these were found would be the occasion for a momentary epiphany, an insight into the psyche as an underlying *unus mundus* or *anima mundi* inhabiting the entire phenomenal world. The doors of analysis were sprung open and depth psychology was taken out of the clinical setting into the world at large. This offered a kind of psychological re-sacrilization of the modern world, as myth-making could be taken up by individuals with an eye for archetypal image and structure. Spirituality became a way of seeing, through an archetypal perspective. In turn, this sensitivity to archetypal image in conscious experience was taken back into analysis, where a multiplicity of archetypal fields were found to be constellated in the dynamic interplay of psyches within the analytic setting.

From Hillman's work flowed the popular books of Thomas Moore (e.g. *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*), the more devotional works of Robert Sardello (e.g. *Love and the World: A Guide to Conscious Soul Practice*), the psychological and theological books and lectures of David Miller (e.g. *The New Polytheism: Rebirth of the Gods and Goddesses*), and the philosophically inclined works of Robert Romanyshyn (e.g. *Mirror and Metaphor: Images and Stories of Psychological Life*).

At the same time, however, other contemporary post-Jungians drew more straightforwardly upon the works of Jung and the early Jungians and extended this into the clinical area with important contributions. Among these perhaps the most notable have been Ann Ulanov, professor of psychology and psychiatry at Union Theological Seminary in New York City

(see, for example, her paper "Spiritual aspects of clinical work"), and Edward Edinger, one of the deans of American analysts (see his classic work *Ego and Archetype*). In addition, Lionel Corbett has made a significant statement in his work, *The Religious Function of the Psyche*.

A critical approach to religious and spiritual aspects in analysis

What makes modern Jungian analysis different from traditional analysis is a critical attitude with respect to technique and interpretation, as well as the incorporation of perspectives from modern psychoanalytic figures such as Winnicott and Bion. As Jungian analysis evolved during the years since the founding of formal training institutes after the Second World War, a strong and ongoing debate took place (and still continues to a degree) between what are sometimes referred to as the clinical and symbolic, or the developmental and classical, approaches to analysis. This argument, sometimes quite acrimonious, has sharpened the thinking on both sides of the divide, and in recent times a sort of rapprochement has come about in that both sides now seem to hear and understand as well as respect one another. Moreover, there are today many "blends" of the two polar opposites that attempt to incorporate the strengths of each and minimize the deficits.

The way the fault lines appeared was as follows. An emphasis on the symbolic (i.e. archetypal and spiritual) aspects of analysis was seen to be characteristic of the Zurich school and those most heavily influenced directly by Jung himself. The critique mounted against this, deriving primarily at first from the London school led by Michael Fordham and his students, was that the symbolic approach missed important features of analytic work by overlooking the personal features of transference and early development. The London school analysts, deeply influenced by object relations theory as it was being elaborated in England in the 1940s and 1950s, sought to bring Jungian analysis closer in line with emerging psychoanalytic (i.e. Kleinian and Middle School) technique and understanding. Their strong emphasis on greater frequency of sessions (four or five times weekly vs the twice per week Zurich standard), the use of the couch rather than sitting *vis-à-vis*, the positive valuation placed on regression in analysis to childhood and infantile levels of transference, and the detailed working through of early developmental phases within the structured space of analysis seemed to contradict Jung's emphasis on the experience of the numinous, the elaboration of personal meaning in one's life and destiny looking forward, and the symbolic. Whereas Jung emphasized the religious aspect of analysis in the careful and scrupulous attention to the activity of the archetypal factors at work in the analytic process, the critics attacked his reliance on dream interpretation and activation of the archetypal layers of the unconscious through active imagination and his relative neglect of personal transference. They claimed that the

Zurich ("classical") analysts were missing the most important dimensions of analysis, namely the careful reconstruction of early psychological development and the attachment between parent and infant as this was re-experienced in the transference. In short, the symbolic approach, they argued, was not clinically sharp and grounded enough. It did not address the psychological difficulties of patients who sought help for their common neurotic conditions, most of which revolved around problems with their relationships.

To this the symbolically oriented analysts answered that the so-called clinical approach failed to deliver on the most important issue of all, namely establishing the ego–Self connection and generating a sense of personal meaning. It lacked the religious element, just as modernity lacks it, and it therefore failed to connect the modern ego to the transcendent, to the Self. Without this connection, wholeness is impossible. A person could be in analysis for hundreds of hours, could understand all the reasons for his or her suffering based on early childhood traumas, could be made more rational and competent in ordinary human relationships, but would not be "cured" of the disease of the modern, namely the lack of connection to the religious function and to the symbols that bring the ego into a more conscious relationship with the Self.

As the debates raged in Congresses and publications, the two sides gradually began hearing one another and changes took place on both parts. The Zurich people became less archetypal and symbolic, and the London people started to talk about the Self in a way that could justify capitalizing the word. An important crossover figure is Mario Jacoby, a senior training analyst in Zurich but who did part of his own training in London. His book on transference, *The Analytic Encounter*, demonstrates a smooth joining of clinical and archetypal/symbolic perspectives and techniques. Similarly, Rosemary Gordon, one of the doyennes of the London school, has written works that embrace the symbolic attitude and perspective and weave it together with a solid clinical approach in works such as "The symbolic experience as bridge between the personal and the collective" and "Masochism: the shadow side of the archetypal need to venerate and worship."

Today it has become generally accepted in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis that there is legitimate human need for religious experience and that the religious function has a healthy role to play in psychological life. Religious feeling is more than simply a holdover from childhood's dependence on the parental figures. Jung's understanding of symbols as links between the rational and the irrational, which bring the ego and the unconscious into closer contact, has become understood as not quite so "mystical" as it had been earlier. In fact, in many psychological and psychoanalytical circles mysticism has become less demonized and more respected than it was in the first and middle parts of the twentieth century. Mysticism is not necessarily contradictory to rationality and practicality. It can even be extremely useful medically. Prayer has been shown experimentally to "work" in helping people

recover from physical illness. And today many therapists accept the notion that human beings are naturally spiritual if they are not blocked from it by collective prejudices. Spirituality is seen as potentially a part of mental health, not as a sign of illness.

As Jungian analysts became more critical, technique and interpretation also changed. It is no longer quite so easy as it once was to make purely reductive or purely synthetic interpretations. There is awareness that both bases need to be covered.

In addition, adding to the critical thinking about spirituality and the religious function as it enters into analytic practice, a new stream of thought has entered into the discussion of the religious and spiritual elements in analysis. This thinking has been centered on the destructive potential of archetypal constellations within the psyche and within the analytic process. In a challenging paper delivered in 1985, Jeffrey Satinover contended that archetypally based psychic structures are compensatory for developmental deficits. They come into play when ordinary ("good enough") care-taking is not available, and they serve the purpose of making up for the deficit by offering imaginal figures and projections that serve the purpose of providing soothing reassurance, protection, comfort, and presence. In this view, the religious function is seen as fundamentally defensive in nature. This view came out of Satinover's work on narcissistic personality disorders, where compensating grandiose fantasies replace actual achievements in the service of bolstering self-esteem. Similar defensive and at times highly destructive and toxic activity on the part of archetypal images and structures were noted by Nathan Schwartz-Salant in his book on narcissism and in his later work on borderline personality disorder. Donald Kalsched provided the capstone for this angle of vision in his book *The Inner World of Trauma*, where he argues that archetypal defenses of the Self arise from early childhood experiences of severe trauma. The "self-care system" that comes into play from the experience of early and severe psychological trauma employs primitive, archaic (i.e. archetypal) defenses to insure the psychic survival of the individual on the one hand, but like autoimmune diseases that attack the body they also have the unfortunate effect of undermining and often destroying the social and psychological viability of the people they are meant to protect. These are the seemingly impenetrable and thorny defensive structures facing the analyst who attempts to work with early trauma victims, who often show severe borderline personality disturbances.

This view that the religious function has a negative potential is not altogether without reference in Jung's own work. Jung recognized the shadow side of the Self clearly in such works as *Answer to Job*, but he and his immediate followers did not employ this insight in their clinical work with patients. It was later, as analysts began working with narcissistic and borderline personality disorders, that this aspect of the religious function began to come into clear view. (The same phenomenon can be found in social

and political reactions to warfare and economic trauma. Societies and cultures show the same proclivity to resort to religious defenses as they seek to protect their embattled national and cultural identities. The "group spirit" becomes the focus of defensive actions, which often have the effect of further traumatizing the people who are supposed to be receiving protection.)

On "negative spirituality"

Jungian analysts from all schools today are trained to be open to the manifestation of the religious function in analysis, whether it manifests positively in numinous dream symbols, for example, or negatively in the defenses of the Self. What does this mean in practice? Fundamentally it means that analysts are prepared to pay "careful and scrupulous attention" to the unconscious factors at work in the analytic process, which can appear in the form of reported dream images, transference and countertransference phenomena, defensive reactions, or any other "field phenomena" as these may appear in the "here and now" of analysis. It is important to note, too, that analysts are taught to refrain from "suggestion" and in their training are not encouraged to create "spiritual enactments" within the analytic frame. This combination of openness to the spiritual and religious (i.e. the archetypal) emergences of the psyche, combined with abstinence from suggesting or enacting spiritual scenarios (such as prayer, quotation from Scriptural texts, encouragement of altered states of consciousness within the session) is what I have come to call "negative spirituality." By this term I mean to distinguish it from the "positive spirituality" that is practiced in religious settings such as churches, temples, mosques, etc. where ritual action is aimed precisely at calling forth or invoking the numinous powers of the archetypal dimension.

The adjectives "negative" and "positive" do not denote value but rather the absence or presence of content. This distinction between "negative" and "positive" spirituality borrows from Isaiah Berlin's distinction between two types of liberty. "Negative liberty" is freedom from external compulsion and constraint; "positive liberty" is freedom to carry out a program of action. In analysis, one practices the discipline of emptiness ("abstinence"), which sets up a "free and sheltered space" (in Dora Kalff's fine phrase) for the analysand's psyche to enter and reveal itself as fully as possible.

Analysis rests upon an inherently uneven relationship between analyst and analysand, because the analyst accepts ethical, professional, and legal responsibility for the process and is paid for it on the one hand, and more importantly because it is fundamentally "for the patient" and his or her psychological benefit, healing, and growth toward wholeness. What the analyst brings to this is training (including many years of personal analysis and supervision), a methodology (technique), self-discipline, and respect for the psyche as it unfolds and reveals its deficits and potentials. The analyst must remain more or less free of expectation, programmatic pressures, or

self-gratifying enactments. In this respect, there are no Christian analysts, Jewish analysts, Hindu analysts, or Moslem analysts – there are only analysts. Their own positive religious, philosophical, and even theoretical (except for the bare methods employed) positions should be bracketed when working with individual analysands. The "analytic space" therefore is ideally empty (negative) until material enters from the individual analysand who walks into a session. (I recognize that this is an "ideal" to be sought, not a given that is guaranteed or for that matter even fully achievable. All analysts, regardless of their own personal convictions or beliefs, grow up in and are deeply influenced by their cultural settings, an important part of which is the prevailing religious ethos.)

I will offer some clinical examples to illustrate how I understand negative spirituality in analysis. The first is a case in which the spiritual appeared as a dangerous predatory figure lurking in wait, a dark angel. A new patient brought a first dream to analysis. He is having breakfast in a resort hotel room, and the window is wide open. Outside he sees the ocean. A moderately strong sea breeze billows a white curtain into the room. I ask him to describe this detail more carefully.

"It's a mild breeze," he says, "very fresh. Sometimes there is a gust of wind and the curtain, you know, billows," he adds, gesturing widely with his arms. "It's a clear sunny day and the breeze is fairly strong, but not threatening. It's a good day for the beach, or for sailing."

As he tells me this, he enters into a mild state of reverie, and I follow him. For a moment it seems like we have entered the dream together and I can almost feel the breeze and taste the salty air. He goes on associating to the image, and I muse to myself: the window is open, there is access to the unconscious, and the timing looks propitious. I also think: wind = *pneuma* = spirit. Something mildly spiritual is stirring. He also tells me that I, the analyst, appear in the dream. I am watching him eat breakfast, and he wonders if I am going to be critical of him. So I realize that a potentially negative transference is already at work, and I can easily be turned into a judging and rejecting parental figure.

Several weeks later he brought in a second dream, which became the centerpiece of analytical work for months. In this one, he is standing on the bank of a large river. Again the element of water is central. Around him and in the water he sees many women and children playing, bathing, and generally relaxing. It is a peaceful, nearly paradisal, scene. As he enters the water and begins swimming, he notes how clear and clean this river is. He can see the bottom, and he enjoys the refreshing cool feeling of the clean water on his bare skin. He swims out a long distance and is about to round a bend when suddenly he spots the form of a great white shark lying quietly on the bottom of the river some 20 or 30 feet beneath the surface. He is stunned, quickly turns back, and gets out of the water. He cannot understand why the women and children do not seem to care and go on swimming and playing around in the water. Don't

they see the shark? Or do they know it is not dangerous? Or has he hallucinated the shark and it's not real? He does not know.

This dream was disquieting but in fact not terribly frightening. He associates the shark to a psychotic break he had during a drug trip many years earlier. This was a major traumatic experience in his life. His life was completely changed by it, and it took him years to recover ego integrity. In the paranoid state he entered during the drug experience, he said, "I was frozen in the eye of God. I could see my sin. God was pointing his finger of accusation right at me. I *knew* [said with strong emphasis] that I was utterly corrupt and rotten. Everything I did was bad. I was the greatest sinner in the world. Only there was nobody else around: I was all God was looking at, and His judgment was absolute and final."

The great white shark – a psychic predator – had once upon a time attacked and devastated his ego. For him this was a spiritual experience of the first order, but also it resulted in a severely pathological reaction. The angry and rejecting side of an awful God of judgment appeared in the drug experience, and his weakened ego became severely traumatized. On the personal level, he could associate this to scenes of childhood scolding and brutality delivered by an alcoholic parent. His parents were not reliable. Surprising and frightening destructive things could happen suddenly and without warning.

"That's why I got out of the river of life," he said, referring to the bad drug trip. "My life stopped at that moment. I longed to go back to being the person I was before the attack, but I couldn't. I was trapped by this knowledge that God had me in his vision and that I was totally bad. And I couldn't figure out why other people weren't equally devastated by this knowledge." The famous preacher and Puritan divine, Jonathan Edwards, would have recognized this spiritual crisis as familiar enough.

In this dream image of the latent shark, produced within the context of analysis many years later, we are given an entry point back to a traumatizing event and a traumatized ego. The dream points to the archetypal factor underlying it, the shadow side of the Self. The presence of this potentially traumatizing force in the unconscious continued to haunt him in the years following. And now it enters the analytic space, looking mild and docile enough at the moment, but potentially explosive and dangerous. Perhaps it can be tamed and metabolized through reflection and be made somewhat more benign through the experience of the transference.

The working through of his pathological guilt and fear of divine retribution, experienced in the psychotic break and imaged by the dream of the shark, showed evidence of some improvement (i.e. normalization) in another (also archetypal) dream that came about a year later. He dreamed:

> A strange spider, having three parts to its body (a head, a thorax, and a body proper), sits on a plastic sphere, which is a hollow container full of liquid from which it can feed. [See drawing by patient, Figure 8.1.] This

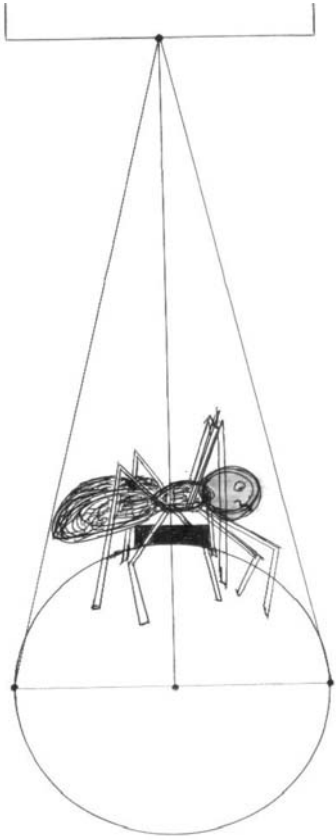


Figure 8.1 Drawing of a dream spider.

> sphere hangs on the front verandah of a house, near the entrance. I live in the house with other people, perhaps family members. The spider looks synthetic, but it is alive and real. The legs are hollow, the head is blue and spherical, and some elements look sort of abstract. It is a female spider, a mother with children. The spider is completely happy, enraptured and totally alive, doing what it needs to be doing. Suddenly and without provocation I kill it. I pull off four of its legs. It grimaces in agony as I destroy its complete and whole small world. Then I stare at the sphere and see that the spider is not there any more. I am very upset to see its place is empty. Someone in the house asks: "Where is the spider?" The spider is of course irreplaceable. I feel terrible for killing it, and I realize that something essential has disappeared from the house. I feel very depressed as I awaken.

This dream was understandably deeply troubling to the analysand (and to

me), and we spent several sessions reflecting on it. The analysand feared he had done some irreparable damage to himself, to his wholeness and his psychological balance. Had he perhaps even destroyed the Self, he wondered? His gratuitous act of wanton destructiveness was as surprising to him as it was to me. He is a kind and gentle soul, environmentally sensitive and nurturing. Turn this dream as we might, exploring every facet and avenue at length and in great detail, nothing "clicked" for him, and both of us remained unsatisfied with the interpretation. Some six weeks later he had another dream that provided the satisfactory answer. It was a simple dream in which reference was made to the spider dream, and the phrase "RESPECT FOR OTHERNESS" appeared and was registered. The thought was that the spider, living in her own world, represented radical "otherness." The word "respect" turned the key in the lock of meaning. Out of experiences like this is born what Hester Solomon has called "the ethical attitude." It is an attitude grounded in awareness of and respect for "the other." But this dream goes even further, to advocate respect for "otherness" itself. This is precisely what Jung meant by the term "religious," which rests on "careful and scrupulous attention" (i.e. respect) toward otherness, toward the factors at work in the psyche and in the world that are beyond the ego's understanding, with which the ego cannot identify short of delusion and insanity. Following Kierkegaard, we can say that the "religious" reaches even beyond the "ethical" dimensions of psychological experience and maturity to embrace respect for otherness itself as this becomes manifest in the numinous. These dreams became the teacher of the religious attitude.

I offer this as an example not of clinical or interpretive brilliance on my part or his. It is rather an example of what I mean by "negative spirituality," which is akin to the similarly named "negative capability" espoused by John Keats and recommended to poets. One dream proposed a puzzle, and another dream answered the puzzle. The task of the analyst here is simply to keep the space open enough to receive both and to live with the frustration and ambiguity of not knowing the answer until the psyche offers its own solution.

Another clinical example of how negative spirituality plays a role in analysis is the following. A patient I had been seeing for a little more than a year brought in a dream that totally surprised him. It is, in my view, an example of the unconscious spirit's freedom and genius for turning our conscious attitudes upside down. This too is the work of the religious function. The context of the dream was extraordinary. The analysand told me that he had the dream while sitting on a bench at the hospital waiting for his daughter to have her third baby. He and his wife were not at all pleased that their daughter was having this child – she was not married and had no means to support herself and her other children, let alone yet another. The baby's father had disappeared. She had refused to undergo an abortion and had insisted on carrying the child to term. So here he was at 2 a.m., waiting with her until she would be taken into the delivery room. He fell asleep on the bench and dreamed that he

found himself in his daughter's hospital room. Some women were hovering around and tending to things. Suddenly he has a vision (in the dream), and in the vision he sees some 20 people standing around his daughter's bed waiting for the birth to take place. They are here to celebrate this *joyful* event. Then he realizes that he recognizes all of these people. Each one is someone he knows from the past. He searches their faces – there is his childhood chum, there is his friend from college, there is his former mentor, on and on. He knows them all. In the dream vision, they are the ages they were when he knew them. He becomes ecstatic and filled with joy because he realizes that while some of these people are actually dead now, still they are here and have returned to be with him at the birth of his new grandchild. He is overcome by gratitude and is weeping for joy to be with his friends again, when his daughter wakes him up and says it is time to go in and give birth.

This dream/vision of a living network of relationships, of links between past (his childhood friends), present (the hospital situation), and future (the new grandchild, a symbol of futurity), is akin to mystical visions of the interconnectedness of all things and beings in the cosmos, seen and unseen. In such moments we are privileged to transcend our limited ego views and preferences. There are larger realities, temporal and atemporal. The ego's position is relativized. The ego puts aside its own limited and immediate concerns as a greater perspective takes hold. The dream helped this man to change his attitude toward his child and grandchild.

The spirituality that arises in analysis is spontaneous, surprising, and almost always contrary to the ego's limited attitudes and expectations. This is possible only if the analyst practices negative spirituality and does not fill the analytic container with positive content and procedures. The patient's psyche does the necessary work.

Another clinical vignette illustrates the appearance of the religious function through a synchronistic event reported in analysis. Synchronicity is the meaningful coincidence of subjective and objective factors. Most often this moment of being shown the surprising interconnectedness of things inner and outer derives from the context of a close human relationship. A patient, who was not at all given to mystical-mindedness and strove to be a rational, skeptical, modern man in all ways, related an unusual happening. He was nonplussed by an incident that took place the day before our session. His daughter had called from another country and told him about a near fatal accident she had been in while driving an old rented car over a narrow mountain road. A tire blew out on her vehicle and nearly caused her to leave the road and tumble to her death in the deep ravine below. She was shaken up but OK. He was recounting this fearful event to another child of his as they were driving into the city to see a show. Just when he was about to tell him about the blowout on her car, one of the tires on his own car blew out with a terrific noise and with such force that the rim of the wheel was instantly grinding on the pavement. He was speechless. The hidden network

of object relations, which includes the psychological and physical domains of our lives, shows its presence sometimes in astonishing ways. If we could see the full extent of it, we would see that we are each connected by threads in a great fabric whose extent and intimate design are beyond our comprehension, and we touch each other in strange ways and surprising places. The net result of such a synchronistic experience is a conviction that there are unseen factors at work behind the scenes, which we do not control or understand. If we pay attention to them, we are engaged in what Jung called the religious attitude.

References

Armstrong, K. (2001) *The Battle for God*, New York: Balantine Books.

Berlin, I. (2002) *Liberty*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Corbett, L. (1996) *The Religious Function of the Psyche*, New York: Routledge.

Edinger, E. (1972) *Ego and Archetype*, New York: Putnam.

—— (1984) *The Creation of Consciousness*, Toronto: Inner City Books.

Geoghegan, W. (2002) *Jung's Psychology As a Spiritual Practice & Way of Life*, Lanham, NY and Oxford: University Press of America.

Gordon, R. (1977) "The symbolic experience as bridge between the personal and the collective", *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, **22**(4), 331–343.

—— (1987) "Masochism: the shadow side of the archetypal need to venerate and worship", *The Archetype of Shadow in a Split World* (Berlin: Tenth International Congress of Analytical Psychology, 2–9 September 1986), pp. 283–295. Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon Verlag.

Hillman, J. (1964) *Suicide and the Soul*, London: Hodder and Stoughton.

—— (1967) *Insearch: Psychology and Religion*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

—— (1971) "Psychology: monotheistic or polytheistic?", *Spring*, 193–207, New York: Spring Publications.

—— (1997) *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling*, New York: Warner Books.

Homans, P. (1995) *Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jacobi, J. (1965) *The Way of Individuation*, New York: New American Library.

Jacoby, M. (1984) *The Analytic Encounter: Transference and Human Relationship*, Toronto: Inner City Books.

Jung, C.G. (1922) "Psychoanalysis and the cure of souls", CW 11, para. 539–552, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

—— (1932) "Psychotherapists or the clergy", CW 11, para. 488–538.

—— (1937) *Psychology and Religion*, CW 11, para. 1–168.

—— (1952) *Answer to Job*, CW 11, para. 553–758.

—— (1958) "Flying saucers: a modern myth of things seen in the skies", CW 10, para. 389–824.

—— (1966) *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, CW 7.

—— (1968) *Psychology and Alchemy*, CW 12.

Kalsched, D. (1996) *The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit*, London and New York: Routledge.

—— (2003) "Daimonic elements in early trauma", *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, **48**(2), 145–170.
Meier, C.A. (1977) *Jung's Analytical Psychology and Religion*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL Southern Illinois University Press.
Miller, D. (1974) *The New Polytheism: Rebirth of the Gods and Goddesses*, New York: Harper and Row.
Moore, T. (1994) *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*, New York: HarperCollins.
Neumann, E. (1954) *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, New York: Pantheon.
Onions, C.T. (ed.) (1966) *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Otto, R. (1923) *The Idea of the Holy* (trans. J.W. Harvey), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Romanyshyn, R. (2001) *Mirror and Metaphor: Images and Stories of Psychological Life*, Pittsburgh, PA: Trivium Publications.
Sardello, R. (2001) *Love and the World: A Guide to Conscious Soul Practice*, Great Barrington, MA: Lindsfarne Books.
Satinover, J. (1985) "At the mercy of another: abandonment and restitution in psychosis and psychotic character", in N. Schwartz-Salant and M. Stein (eds), *Abandonment*, pp. 47–86, Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications.
Schwartz-Salant, N. (1982) *Narcissism and Character Transformation*, Toronto: Inner City Books.
—— (1989) *The Borderline Personality: Vision and Healing*, Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications.
Sloek, J. (1996) *Devotional Language*, New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
Solomon, H. (2001) "Origins of the ethical attitude", *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, **46**(3), 443–454.
Ulanov, A. (1995) "Spiritual aspects of clinical work", in M. Stein (ed.), *Jungian Analysis*, Chicago: Open Court.